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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAHORE 000122

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: TRAFFICKING STILL PREVELANT IN RAHIM YAR KHAN

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The southern district of Rahim Yar Khan has served as Pakistan's hub for children trafficked to the Gulf States to work as camel jockeys. Since 2005, the Federal government has repatriated over 800 trafficked children from the United Arab Emirates. According to UNICEF, the Government of UAE now provides monthly stipends for educational activities as well as funding for community development programs in the areas in Punjab affected by child trafficking. End Summary.

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Life as a Camel Jockey
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¶2. (SBU) On May 8, PO met trafficked children at the Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organization (PRWSWO) office in Rahim Yar Khan. Former camel jockeys in the UAE, the repatriated children re-enacted their trafficking journey. They depicted a father who sent his son away in exchange for money, the child's journey to UAE, and the torture he faced, such as forced dunkings in water and electrical shocks to maintain his weight below 15 kg. The boy died at the end after falling from a wild camel.

¶3. (SBU) There have been twelve reported death cases from Rahim Yar Khan, said Sabir Farhat, Secretary General of PRWSWO. "The children face horrible living conditions," he said. "They fall off the camel, break bones and are put right back on the camel to train," he described.

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Repatriation and Identification
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¶4. (SBU) Shamsad Qureshi, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist, told poloff on May 18 he has estimated the number of Pakistani children trafficked to the UAE at 1,000. "Initially we were told there are 5,000 children and then 3,000. No one is sure of the exact number but we designed our program to accommodate 1,000 children," he related. To date, 811 have returned to Pakistan, he noted: 751 from Punjab and over 300 from Rahim Yar Khan. Children as young as three years old are sold to the trafficking agents and can be separated from their families for up to seven years, Muhammad Farhan Aamir, District Officer from Punjab Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (CPWB) told poloff on May 8. Reuniting children who have little recollection of their parents or Pakistan poses a particular challenge, he noted. Muhammad Farhan Aamir told poloff that seven children recently returned to Lahore but he questioned whether they had Pakistan nationality because they speak limited Urdu. He confirmed with poloff on May 13 that three of these children have reunited with their families through DNA testing and CPWB has continued to take care of the other four in Lahore.

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UAE Provides Rehabilitation Funds via UNICEF

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15. (SBU) Muhammad Farhan Aamir told poloff on May 12 that the UAE provides limited compensation to formerly trafficked children via a government-to- government exchange. Severe injury or death cases, said Farhan, can receive between 2-3,000 dollars. A trafficked child that was not injured will usually receive 1,000 dollars, he continued. Designed for country-wide implementation, the program has only had an impact in Punjab, commented Farhan, because other provinces lack the infrastructure to support the repatriated children. The second program, also funded by UAE, started after the 2005 agreement between the UAE and UNICEF. The program provides a monthly stipend of Rs 600 (7.5 dollars) to the families of repatriated children for education, said Shamshad Qureshi of UNICEF. Continued enrollment in the endowment fund depends on an 80 percent attendance rate, certified by school administrators, he detailed. Upon turning 18, the children receive a lump sum of Rs 72,000 (900 dollars), Shamshad explained. As part of this same program, UNICEF Punjab Chief, Deepak Bajracharya, told poloff on May 18, UNICEF has initiated health and education community development projects in six union councils in Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalpur and Rajanpur. "Community-based initiatives funded by this program are used to attack the base problems that force parents to sell their children as camel jockeys," he clarified. "We have seen positive results in these programs and are making a case to the government of UAE to extend these programs as they are scheduled to expire in December."

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Poverty is the Root Cause
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15. (SBU) I.A. Rehman, Deputy Director of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, told poloff May 13 that repatriation entails just one part of the "camel kids" plight. "Their parents sent them to be camel jockeys to make money. Now that they are back, what will they do?" he remarked. "Parents do this to their children because they do not have another option. When the children return, there is no way to support them," he continued. In Rahim Yar Khan, PRWSO focuses on continuing education for children that have returned from UAE, said Sabir Farhat. The organization has enrolled over 300 children in formal school, established non-formal education centers and provided job skills training. "We try to give them skills that they can use anywhere and do not have to be working in the hot sun," he noted. PRWSO would like to establish a technical and vocational skills training center dedicated to trafficked children in Rahim Yar Khan to provide continuous psychological counseling and life skills training, he suggested. To prevent further trafficking, PRWSO created 77 anti-trafficking committees to warn parents about the dangers of trafficking, Sabir Farhat reported. Shamshad Qureshi of UNICEF told poloff on May 18 that the "community can play a strong role in ending trafficking," citing an incident where community members prevented a parent from selling his child to be trafficked.

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Traffickers Unaffected
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16. (SBU) Traffickers of children to UAE are still in the business of trafficking. Some, said Muhammad Farhan Aamir, have connections with Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) or local police. Other countries still want children to race camels, poverty compels parents to send their children away and traffickers continue exploit children, he continued. "It is the responsibility of the government and NGOs to stop this from happening," Farhan said told poloff on June 3.

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